

**Thomas Jefferson to Gideon Granger, March 29, 1801,  
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.  
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester  
Ford.**

**TO THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL J. MSS. (GIDEON GRANGER.)**

Washington, Mar. 29, 1801.

Dear Sir, —I have long been indebted to you a letter; but it has been because you desired me to write by Mr. Ervin the bearer of yours, who is not yet gone back. But in the meantime I trust that the post is become a safe channel to and from me. I have heard indeed of some extraordinary licenses practiced in the post offices of your state, & there is nothing I desire so much as information of facts on that subject, to rectify the office. If you can be the means of furnishing them to me they will be thankfully & usefully esteemed. Nothing presents such difficulties of administration as offices. About appointments to them the rule is simple enough. The federalists having been in exclusive possession of them from the first origin of the party among us, to the 3d of Mar. 9. o'clock p. m. of the evening, at 12 of which Mr. A. was to go out of office, their reason will acknowledge the justice of giving vacancies as they happen to those who have been so long excluded, till the same general proportion prevails in office which exist out of it. But removals are more difficult. No one will say that all should be removed, or that none should. Yet no two scarcely draw the same lines. I consider as nullities all the appointments (of a removable character) crowded in by Mr. Adams when he knew he was appointing counsellors and agents for his successor and not for himself. Persons who have perverted their offices to the oppression of their fellow citizens, as marshals packing juries, attorneys grinding their legal victims, intolerants removing those under them for opinion's sake, substitutes for honest men

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removed for their republican principles, will probably find few advocates even among their quondam party. But the freedom of opinion, and the reasonable maintenance of it, is not a crime, and ought not to occasion injury. These are as yet matters under consideration, our administration having never yet been assembled to decide finally on them. However some of them have in the meantime been acted on in cases which pressed. There is one in your state which calls for decision, and on

which Judge Lincoln will ask yourself and some others to consult & advise us. It is the case of Mr. Goodrich,<sup>1</sup> whose being a recent appointment,

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson also wrote to Pierrepont Edwards as follows:

“ Washington, Mar. 29, 1801.

“ Sir,—You will doubtless have long ago learned that the office which was the subject of your two favors to me was filled by Mr. Adams some days before he went out of office. I have not considered as candid, or even decorous the crowding of appointments by Mr. A. after he knew he was making them for his successor and not for himself even to 9. o'clock of the night at twelve of which he was to go out of office. I do not think I ought to permit that conduct to have any effect, as to the offices removable in their nature. Of course this would leave me free to fill Mr. Goodrich's place by any other person. This is a subject worthy of mature consideration, and therefore Judge Lincoln will ask of yourself & some few of your fellow laborers, who best know all the circumstances which ought to weigh, to consult and advise us on this subject; taking a broad view of it, general as well as local. If it be thought that there may be a character, which might prevail in a comparison with Mr. Goodrich's & whose appointment would better further the progress of republican opinion, be so good as to favor us with your sentiments either addressed to myself directly, or to Mr. Lincoln. And in all cases I invite, & shall receive with great thankfulness your opinion & that of others on the course of things, & particularly in the suggestion of characters who may worthily be appointed to vacancies which happen within your knolege. Your spontaneous information too would be desirable, without waiting for the solicitation of

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those who wish office. My other occupations may not permit me to return you my thanks on every special occasion of receiving your information, and therefore I must hope it on the score of public not personal favors & refer you for the acknowledgment to the effect which you may be assured your opinions will have here. Accept assurances of my high consideration & respect.”

made a few days only before Mr. Adams went out of office, is liable to the general nullification I affix to them. Yet there might be reason for continuing him: or if that would do more harm than good, we should inquire who is the person in the state who, superseding Mr. Goodrich, would from his character & standing in society, most effectually silence clamor, and justify the executive in a comparison of the two characters. For though I consider Mr. G's appointment as a nullity in effect, yet others may view it as a possession and removal, and ask if that removal has been made to put in a better man? I pray you to take a broad view of this subject, consider it in all its bearings, local and general, and communicate to me your opinion. And on all subjects and at all times I shall highly prize your own communications to me, and solicit them earnestly. The immense pressure of my other duties will not allow me to write letter for letter; but you must excuse that, and consider a sacrifice you ought to make to the public service; especially assured, as you may be, that your letters, though not acknowledged, will not be unattended to in their effect. I particularly ask your opinion of characters suitable for any office which becomes vacant in your knolege, and would rather receive your voluntary and spontaneous information, than that which is extorted by solicitation of parties interested. Accept assurances of my perfect esteem & high consideration & respect.